

Biographical notes on the French author JOSEPH RIBAS

by Alan Mattingly, December 2021

Joseph Ribas is a French writer, illustrator, columnist and former teacher.^[1] He has been a leading French writer on the Pyrenees mountains since the 1970s. He has also been cited, in Wikipédia, as being among the "great names" of French: *pyrénéisme*, a French literary movement which has this range of mountains as its focus. Ribas also devised the route of the *Haute randonnée pyrénéenne*, one of Europe's best-known high-level trails. It runs the length of the Pyrenees mountains and links the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

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Principal works

Ribas has made notable contributions to French writings on the Pyrenees mountain range, which straddles the frontier between France and Spain. Some of these works (and others by Ribas) are illustrated by himself.


Robinson Crusoe in the Pyrenees

In *Robinson Crusoe dans les Pyrénées*^[2] (1995) Ribas traces the route across the Pyrenees mountains, from Pamplona to Toulouse, which Daniel Defoe possibly imagined for Robinson Crusoe in chapters 19 and 20^[3] of Defoe's famous 1719 novel. During this winter crossing, Defoe depicts Crusoe and his companions as having a terrible battle with 300 ravenous wolves. Ribas speculates as to whether Defoe based his description of Crusoe's journey on his own possible travels in Spain and France. But he accepts that no definite conclusion on his point can yet be reached.

Joseph Ribas



Joseph Ribas and his wife, Mireille Ribas, Vernet-les-Bains, France, 2008.

Born	1931 <u>Saint-Laurent-de-la-Salanque</u> , France
Occupation	Writer
Language	French
Notable works	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Canigou, montagne sacrée des Pyrénées</i>, 1993, 2003▪ <i>Robinson Crusoe dans les Pyrénées</i>, 1995▪ <i>Petit précis de pyrénéisme</i>, 1998
Signature	

This work by Ribas has been referred to subsequently by various authors - see examples below.^{[4][5][6]}

Canigou

Ribas's *Canigou, montagne sacrée des Pyrénées*^[7] (1993 & 2003, with illustrations by the author; also a version in Catalan, 1996) is a comprehensive narrative about the Canigou massif, which rises to an altitude of 2,785 metres at the far eastern end of the Pyrenees mountain range, and which is a mountain revered by Catalans. Ribas's book is cited (including in official publications) as a work of reference on the Canigou massif.^[8]

The section in this book entitled *Anglais au Canigou* (the English on Canigou) is a compact account of travels in and around the Canigou massif by English writers, artists and pioneer tourists - from Morris Birkbeck in 1814^[9] to V C Scott O'Connor in 1911^[10]. Ribas particularly noted the 15-hour trek across the massif from Arles-sur-Tech to Prades undertaken by James Erskine Murray in 1835^[11], and the long and arduous ascent of Canigou from Saint-Martin-du-Canigou by Charles Richard Weld in 1858^[12]

Rudyard Kipling described Canigou as "a magician among mountains". Kipling is one of the writers and travellers whose fascination and encounters with Canigou are depicted in Ribas's *Témoignages retrouvés - L'aventure du Canigou* (1996).^[13] This book inspired Curt Wittlin's work (in Catalan) *De la Maladeta al Canigó : cinquanta visions del Pirineu Català*.^[14]

Ribas is seen as an authority on the subject of the Canigou massif, by public bodies and by other writers.^{[15][16]}

Pyrénéisme

For his writings on the Pyrenees mountains, Ribas has been cited as being among the "great names" of French: *pyrénéisme*. This term was first coined by the French author and publisher Henri Beraldi in his work *Cent ans aux Pyrénées*.^[17] Whatever else *pyrénéisme* might be taken to mean today, it retains at its core the acts of "exploring, experiencing and writing about" the Pyrenees mountains.^[18]

In his *Petit Précis de Pyrénéisme*^[19], Ribas summarises the works over two centuries of prominent authors on the Pyrenees, including Henry Russell and Franz Schrader. Ribas's work has been cited as "unveiling in its entirety" the "epic" of *pyrénéisme* ("*L'épopée du Pyrénéisme dévoilée en entier... en un tour de plume par Joseph Ribas*") (in French).^[20]

Other works

Ribas has written a large number of articles for the regional newspaper *La Dépêche du Midi*, for the specialist review *French: Pyrénées*, and for other journals.

He has published several other books (see list below) - on his profession of teaching, and on the Pyrenees and Roussillon in particular.

Haute randonnée pyrénéenne

The French: *Georges Véron*, was published in 1974. But Véron has acknowledged that Ribas, "the poet who sees beyond the horizon", was the inspiration behind the project ("*Ribas, le poète qui voit plus loin que l'horizon, comprit avant moi l'intérêt d'un itinéraire de haute randonnée traversant les Pyrénées.*") (in French).^[21] Joseph Ribas traced out a possible route for the trail, from Banyuls-sur-Mer to Hendaye (both in France), in 1968.

Biographical information

Joseph Ribas was born in 1931 in Saint-Laurent-de-la-Salanque, a village in the coastal plain near Perpignan, in the Pyrénées-Orientales, France. His parents were immigrants from Spain who crossed the frontier seeking work in the vineyards of Roussillon.^[22]

Joseph Ribas and his wife Mireille live in Canohès, near Perpignan, France.

Distinctions

Ribas led a career as a teacher. In 1977, for his services to education, he was awarded the title of *Officier* of the *Ordre des Palmes Académiques*.

In 2004, a public library (*bibliothèque* in French) bearing the name of Joseph Ribas was opened in the commune of Saint-Marsal (Aspres, Pyrénées-Orientales, France).

In March 2021, the German, Munich-based artistic association *Dialog - Neues Münchner Kunstforum e.V.* ^[24], in collaboration with the publishing house German: *Otto Sagner*, awarded the "German: *Dominante-Preis*" to Joseph Ribas for his literary work as a whole. This prize, created in 2011 and awarded annually, is for "outstanding discoveries and the development of new aesthetic principles in literature or music" ("*herausragende Entdeckungen und Entwicklung neuer ästhetischer Prinzipien in der Literatur oder in der Musik*"). The name of the prize is taken from that of a German - Russian almanac for literature and art that has been published in Munich since 2006.



Bibliothèque, Saint-Marsal^[23], with the inscription *BIBLIOTHEQUE MUNICIPALE - JOSEPH RIBAS - ECRIVAIN [writer] PYRENEISTE*.

List of works

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- *Les terres veuves*, Bordeaux, Les nouveaux cahiers de jeunesse, 1961.
- *Marius Noguès*, Rodez, Subervie, 1973.
- *Lecture, discipline d'éveil*, with Raymond Clais, Paris, French: *Magnard*, 1975.
- *Faire vivre un livre en classe*, with Raymond Clais, Paris, Hatier, Éditions de l'Amitié, 1975.
- *Sentiers et randonnées des Pyrénées*, Paris, Fayard, 1977.
- *Sentiers et randonnées du Roussillon*, Paris, Fayard, 1978.
- *Sentiers et randonnées du Languedoc*, Paris Fayard 1980.
- *Les grandes heures du Club Alpin Français dans les Pyrénées, Préfaces des Tomes I, II, III*, Fayence, Sirius 1983.
- *Mes Pyrénées, chroniques*, Fayence, Sirius, 1985.

- *Les chemins de Garonne*, Toulouse, Milan, 1990.
- *El Canigó, Història i mite*, Vic, Catalan: *Eumo Editorial*, 1996.
- *Canigou, montagne sacrée des Pyrénées*, Toulouse, Loubatières, 1993, 2003.
- *Robinson Crusoe dans les Pyrénées*, with translations of texts by Daniel Defoe, illustrations by Jean-Claude Pertuzé, Toulouse, Loubatières, 1995.^[26]
- *Témoignages retrouvés - L'aventure du Canigou*, Ibos, Randonnées pyrénéennes, 1996 (published with the support of the *Centre Régional des Lettres Midi-Pyrénées*).^[27]
- *Petit précis de pyrénéisme*, Toulouse, Loubatières, 1998.
- *Roussillon au cœur*, Toulouse, Loubatières, 2003.
- *Caram ! Aixó me mira*, with Pere Verdaguer, illustrations by Jean-Claude Pertuzé, Toulouse, Loubatières, 2004.
- *Michel Maurette*, anthology, Paris, French: *Éditions de l'Olivier*, 2006.^[28]
- *Pyrénées le désir de voyage*, 110 illustrations by the author, Pau, Monhélios, 2009.^[29]
- Joseph Ribas also participated in the publication in 1996 of *Lady Fortescue une aristocrate anglaise aux Pyrénées en 1818* (Toulouse: Loubatières), which contained 76 drawings made in the eastern and central Pyrenees during the spring of 1818 by Henrietta-Ann Fortescue (1763-1841). The illustrations in this book were preceded by introductory articles by French: *Pierre Tucoc-Chala*, French: *Hélène Saule-Sorbé* and Joseph Ribas (who described, in *Chemins d'Images*, the routes taken by Lady Fortescue in her artistic tour of the Pyrenees).

References

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2. Ribas, Joseph (1995). *Robinson Crusoe dans les Pyrénées* [*Robinson Crusoe in the Pyrenees*] (in French). Toulouse: Loubatières.
3. Defoe, Daniel (1719). "The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, chapters 19 & 20" (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/521/521-h/521-h.htm#chap19>). *www.gutenberg.org*. Project Gutenberg. Retrieved 2 August 2021.
4. Aymard, Robert (2008). *Pyrénées, vers un millénaire de présence anglaise* (<https://journals.openedition.org/caliban/1190>) [Approaching one thousand years of English presence in the Pyrenees] (in French). *Caliban - French Journal of English Studies*. OpenEdition Journals. Retrieved 24 July 2021. Here, Aymard wrote of the *compétence* with which Ribas traced Crusoe's route across the Pyrenees.
5. García, Mariano (2019). *Robinson Crusoe estuvo en Aragón* (Joseph Ribas defiende en un libro que el famoso naufrago de Daniel Defoe atravesó los Pirineos por el Puerto de Plan) (<https://www.heraldo.es/noticias/ocio-y-cultura/2019/10/13/joseph-ribas-daniel-defoe-pirineos-robinson-crusoe-1338195.html>) [Robinson Crusoe was in Aragon (Joseph Ribas argues in a book that Daniel Defoe's famous castaway crossed the Pyrenees by the Puerto de Plan)] (in Spanish). *www.heraldo.es*. *Heraldo de Aragón* (a Spanish regional newspaper). Retrieved 24 July 2021.
6. Duval, Gilles (2020). Chapitre 1 - Robinson Crusoe, un Pionnier? [Chapter 1 - Robinson Crusoe, a Pioneer?] (in French). In: *Façons de voir, Façons de regarder - les Pyrénées et leurs explorateurs* [*Ways of seeing, ways of looking - the Pyrenees and their explorers*] (1st ed.). Paris: *L'Harmattan*. Here, Duval used Ribas's text as a starting point for an essay on Crusoe and Daniel Defoe. He was complimentary about Ribas's work, but, unlike Ribas, he doubted whether Defoe ever set foot outside England.
7. Ribas, Joseph (1993). *Canigou, montagne sacrée des Pyrénées* [*Canigou, sacred mountain of the Pyrenees*] (in French) (1st ed.). Toulouse: Loubatières.

8. For example, in *Grand Site de France du Massif du Canigó 2018-2024, dossier de renouvellement* (https://www.grandsitedefrance.com/images/stories/Label/dossier_renouvellement_canigo_2018_vdef-bd.pdf) [*Application for renewal of the classification of the Canigó massif as a "Grand Site de France"*] (in French). Prades, France: Syndicat Mixte Canigó Grand Site (a group of local authorities and other public bodies all providing services in the Canigou/Canigó massif area). Retrieved 3 August 2021. In this publication, Ribas's book on Canigou is cited on, for instance, pages 24, 25 and 121.
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10. O'Connor, V C Scott (1913), *Travels in the Pyrenees*. London: John Long. <https://archive.org/details/travelsinpyrenees00oconrich/mode/2up>, retrieved 11 August 2021.
11. Murray, James Erskine (1837), *A summer in the Pyrenees*. London: John Macrone. <https://archive.org/details/dli.granth.36440/mode/2up>, retrieved 11 August 2021.
12. Weld, Charles-Richard (1859), *The Pyrenees West and East*. London: Longman. <https://archive.org/details/dli.granth.52963/mode/2up>, retrieved 11 August 2021.
13. Ribas, Joseph (1996). *Témoignages retrouvés - L'aventure du Canigou* [*Recovered testimonies - the Canigou adventure*] (in French). Ibos, France: Randonnées pyrénéennes.
14. Wittlin, Curt (editor) (2004). *De la Maladeta al Canigó : cinquanta visions del Pirineu Català* [*From Maladeta to Canigó: fifty visions of the Catalan Pyrennes*] (in Catalan). Lleida, Spain: Pagès (Col·lecció Guimet, 77). Wittlin has written ([Societat Catalana de Geografia \(https://scg.iec.cat/Scg9/Scg90/S92391.htm\)](https://scg.iec.cat/Scg9/Scg90/S92391.htm)): "La publicacion de Joseph Ribas (L'aventure du Canigou)... m'ha servit de model i inspiració" ["Joseph Ribas's publication (L'aventure du Canigou) served me as a model and source of inspiration"]. Retrieved 4 August 2021.
15. Brejon de Lavergnée, Marie-Édith; Bobo, Jean-Pierre; Soutadé, Gérard (1997). *Le Canigou, 1896-1996. Un siècle d'aménagements. Actes du colloque de Perpignan, 15 novembre 1996* [*Canigou, 1896-1996. A century of development. Proceedings of the Perpignan colloquium, 15 November 1996*] (in French). Perpignan, France: Archives départementales des Pyrénées-Orientales. Ribas was called upon to make a presentation at this colloquium on writers who had been inspired by Canigou. His contribution (pp. 197-210) was entitled *Le Canigou, montagne d'inspiration littéraire* [*Canigou, mountain of literary inspiration*].
16. Lacan, Jean-Pierre (9 July 2013). *Un été au sommet : Canigou, inoxydable pic de fer des Pyrénées-Orientales* (<https://www.midilibre.fr/2013/07/09/canigou-inoxidable-pic-de-fer,729086.php>) [A summer on the summit: Canigou, the eternal mountain of iron of the eastern Pyrenees] (in French). *Midi Libre* (a French regional newspaper). Montpellier, France: Société du Journal Midi Libre. Retrieved 3 August 2021. Much of this article is based upon an interview with Joseph Ribas.
17. Beraldi, Henri (1898-1904). *Cent ans aux Pyrénées* [*One hundred years in the Pyrenees*] (in French) (7 volumes). Pau, France: Les amis du Livre Pyrénéen (new edition, 1977).
18. Beraldi, Henri (1898). Livre I - Excursion Biblio-Pyrénéenne [Book I - a journey through books about the Pyrennes] (in French). In: *Cent Ans aux Pyrénées, Livres I-II* (<https://books.google.fr/books?id=LwLeDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>) [*One hundred years in the Pyrenees, Books I-II*] (in French) (2001-2017 edition). Cressé, France: Editions de Régionalisme. p5. Retrieved 4 August 2021. Here, Beraldi wrote: "L'idéal du pyrénéiste est de savoir à la fois ascensionner, écrire et sentir" ["The pyreneist's ideal is to know how to climb, write and feel, all wrapped-up in one."].
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22. Ribas, Joseph (2021). *Le désert de Salobre*. Munich, Germany: Editions Dumat. pp. 26–35. (Publication in preparation).
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 26. The illustrations by Jean-Claude Pertuzé which Ribas's text on Robinson Crusoe in the Pyrenees inspired were the subject of an exhibition in Toulouse in 1995.
 27. "*Centre Régional des Lettres Midi-Pyrénées*" (<http://sudocps.univ-toulouse.fr/occitanie-livre-lecture-ex-crl>). Retrieved 29 July 2021.
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